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Olympia-- During the last week of April in SeaTac, an amazing group of individuals came together to see what their responsibilities and roles are in community preparedness. There were 42 people participating in a Community Emergency Response Training (CERT), part of the new Citizen Corps initiatives and programs.

These individuals came from all over the state plus Washington D.C., Colorado, New Mexico, Oregon, and Alaska to spend four days in hands-on course work. On the fifth day they participated in an earthquake disaster simulation where they had to assess the scene, set up a command structure, search for victims and triage each one. Once victims had been identified, they were extricated from the site and taken to an established medical treatment area. The amazing thing about this class is that the students each came from a specific needs community or a community that has CERT available. Several participants were from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, others had mobility issues and three individuals came from the community of the Visually Impaired and Blind.

Washington State hosted the national pilot for an Ability Oriented Community Emergency Response Training that focused on including all individuals within the community's preparedness. In the first chapters the curriculum addressed learning styles, to include those with different strategies of learning. The students learned about personal preparedness at home, in their place of work and throughout the community. Then the class moved to fire suppression. The entire class had hands on work to put out a fire in the hotel parking lot. The teams were blended, an individual who was sight impaired was teamed with an individual with mobility issues. One team utilized manual wheelchairs to approach the fire, put it out and then return to the safe zone. The teams, with very little preparation time, established a strategy to fight the fire and how the members were going to communicate, especially when one or both team members are deaf.

Chapters three and four moved the class through disaster medical methods and techniques. One member of the class offered to be the victim to show the class how to do triage on a human victim. Everyone participated in a hands-on exercise training to see how triage feels and to experience doing the actual triage.

Finally, we participated in Disaster Psychology and All-Hazards identification. We focused on the mental health and team approach with the psychology related to disasters and making sure that teams are taken care of and how individuals react during disaster.

Day five was the test of all the skills learned through the hands-on, in class training. Each individual was placed on a team that morning and then Team Zulu were victims and Team Alpha was responsible for completing the missions outlined in the CERT curriculum: establish a management team, conduct Search and Rescue, rapid triage, evacuation and establish a medical treatment area. Then it was Team Zulu's turn to do the same process. Each team successfully found all 13 victims and safely evacuated and treated each one appropriately.

As instructors we were honored to learn from this group of individuals on how their strengths and life lessons truly show that everyone has a role in preparedness and everybody has a roll on a CERT team.

The final curriculum will be developed in August and will include an instructor's manual, overheads, preparedness and mitigation video with open captioning and also a newly revised student manual. The final documents will be available in September, in partnership with the National Citizen Corps Program and programs across the nation as we celebrate National Preparedness Month.



Washington Coalition
of Citizens with disAbilities



Pictures from the event:



Picture 1: Kevin Nathan and Jay Cole put out the fire quickly. Kevin is blind and Jay is hard of hearing.



Picture 2: Cee Cee Molineaux and Dino Christianson conduct SAR Operation and find Yang-su Cho. Dino is deaf and Yang-su is blind.



Picture 3: Team Alpha going to begin their earthquake simulation. This team was a blend of students from the specific needs community. The Incident Commander was blind.



Picture 4: Medical Triage area at the training, one victim, PattiJean Hooper is being taken care of by Robert Blumenfeld. Robert has mobility issues.



Picture 5: Tim Crabtree evacuating Ernie Butler from the disaster simulation site. Tim participated through Colorado's Citizen Corps Council.



Other Pictures available:



Picture 6: Jannette Murphy and Daivd Lee approach the fire, using their newly aquired skills.



Picture 7: Dominic Marzano, Instructor from the City of Kent Fire Department, show Yang-su Cho and Melissa Parsley how to use a different styles fire extinguisher during the hands-on demonstrations.



Picture 8: Ernie Butler and Ed Kennedy, show us all how to put out the fire using the appropriate safety skills for a CERT Team.